BACKGROUNDER NO. 5-5730 APRIL 15, 1978

WAYNE COREY/ BANGKOK

CAMBODIA: THREE YEARS LATER
(ADVANCE FOR MONDAY, APRIL 17)

ANNCR:

ON MONDAY, APRIL 17, CAMBODIA OBSERVES THE THIRD ANNIVERSARY OF THE COMMUNIST TAKEOVER. DURING THIS PERIOD, THE SMALL INDO-CHINESE COUNTRY HAS EXPERIENCED THE MOST PROFOUND SOCIAL, POLITICAL, AND ECONOMIC REVOLUTION IN MODERN HISTORY. WITH A BACKGROUND REPORT, HERE IS WAYNE COREY IN BANGKOK

VOICE:

IN A RECENT BROADCAST, PHNOM PENH RADIO SUMMARIZED CAMBODIAN LIFE AFTER THREE YEARS OF COMMUNISM. IT SAID THERE IS A GREAT DIFFERENCE BETWEEN CAMBODIA AND OTHER COUNTRIES. FOR EXAMPLE, IT SAID, OTHER COUNTRIES STILL HAVE A CURRENCY, A WAGE SYSTEM, MARKETPLACES, AND PRIVATE PROPERTY, BUT THERE ARE OTHER DIFFERENCES WHICH WERE NOT MENTIONED, SUCH AS THE COMMUNAL KITCHENS WHICH FAIL TO PROVIDE SUFFICIENT FOOD FOR THE HARD-WORKING PEOPLE OF CAMBODIA. THERE IS ALSO THE CONTINUING PURGE OF THOSE WHO LIVED IN CITIES IN THE PAST, AND THERE ARE THE EXECUTIONS OF THOSE WHO CANNOT MEET THE AUTHORITIES' HARSH DEMANDS. THOUSANDS OF CAMBODIANS HAVE FLED TO THAILAND AND VIETNAM, AND THE VIETNAMESE ARE REPORTED TRAINING SOME OF THEM TO HELP OVERTHROW THE CAMBODIAN GOVERNMENT.

ANALYSTS HERE IN BANGKOK SUGGEST THAT CAMBODIA MAY HAVE PROVOKED ITS BORDER WAR WITH VIETNAM BY LAUNCHING GENERALLY SMALL-SCALE BUT SAVAGE ATTACKS INTO VIETNAMESE TERRITORY. THE ANALYSTS SAY THESE ATTACKS REFLECTED THE CAMBODIANS' HISTORIC FEAR OF BEING CULTURALLY ABSORBED BY VIETNAM, AND THAT THEY WERE PROBABLY INTENDED TO KEEP THE VIETNAMESE AWAY

FROM THE CAMBODIAN BORDER.

AFTER THREE YEARS, THE STATE OF DEMOCRATIC KAMPUCHEA" , AS THE AUTHORITIES IN PHNOM PENH CALL CAMBODIA, MAY BE MOVING TOWARD INTERNAL COLLAPSE. THE SAME PHNOM PENH RADIO BROADCAST THAT ACKNOWLEDGED THAT CAMBODIA IS NOT LIKE OTHER COUNTRIES ALSO INDICATED THAT THERE IS A POPULAR LACK OF UNDERSTANDING ABOUT THE REVOLUTION. IT SAID MANY WHO JOINED THE REVOLUTION LATER SWITCHED TO THE SIDE OF THE ENEMY.

THE INITIAL REPORTS BY REFUGEES ON WHAT WAS HAPPENING IN CAMBODIA AFTER THE COMMUNISTS TOOK CONTROL IN 1975 WERE NOT ACCEPTED EASILY BY A DISBELIEVING WORLD. BUT CAMBODIA'S RULERS NOW STAND CONDEMNED BY MANY COUNTRIES, INCLUDING THE UNITED STATES, FOR THEIR MASSIVE VIOLATIONS OF HUMAN RIGHTS, WHICH HAVE RESULTED IN WIDESPREAD DEATHS AND A SHARP DECREASE IN THE POPULATION. THE LONDON-BASED HUMAN RIGHTS ORGANIZATION, AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL, HAS APPEALED TO THE CAMBODIANN GOVERNMENT FOR PERMISSION TO SEE THE SITUATION FOR ITSELF. THERE HAS BEEN NO RESPONSE. AT THE SAME TIME, THE CAMBODIAN COMMUNISTS STILL REFUSE TO ACCEPT INTERNATIONAL AID OR TO TAKE PART IN REGIONAL ORGANIZATIONS. AND THE FEW FOREIGN DIPLOMATIC MISSIONS IN PHNOM PENH ARE SEVERELY RESTRICTED.

THUS, THREE YEARS AFTER THE COMMUNIST TAKEOVER, CAMBODIA'S SELF-IMPOSED ISOLATION HAS MADE IT ONE OF THE WORLD'S MOST MYSTERIOUS AND FORBIDDING COUNTRIES. WJL